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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

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From Ft. Hood to Iraq to Afghanistan to Pakistan:

Capitalism Guilty of Racist Murder

The war for oil being waged in Iraq and Afghanistan is also taking its toll in the U.S. The 13 deaths at Ft. Hood can be added to the 5,300 dead U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan and over one million Iraqi and Afghanis killed since the invasions of 2003.

We shouldn't fall for either of the bosses' media spins on the Ft. Hood shootings: the overtly racist Fox News take that "all Muslims are evil," or the liberal Obama-New York Times slant that "embraces all religions" in pursuit of imperialist war. The profit system itself stands guilty of all the murders, from Texas to the Mid-East to Central Asia. Our Party has long held the position of "Turn the Guns Around." Unlike Hasan, who targeted rank-and-file soldiers, we advocate mass, militant, anti-racist, anti-imperialist action against top officers and the capitalists they serve. This struggle forms part of our long-term strategy to build a mass communist party that will ultimately destroy the war-making billionaires in a communist revolution.

The profit-driven U.S. war machine had already slaughtered over 700,000 non-combatants in oil-rich Iraq by 2006, according to the British medical journal Lancet. In Afghanistan, U.S.-led forces killed 345 civilians between January and August 2009, the UN reports. These figures don't include the 90 Afghan civilians wiped out in September by NATO or the six innocent farmers and three of their children incinerated recently by a U.S. missile. CIA and U.S. Air Force drones have slain over 700 Pakistani civilians since 2006. To perpetuate this serial killing, U.S. rulers are pouncing on the Ft. Hood incident to increase anti-Islamic sentiment.

Whether Major Nidal Hasan did this on his own or was put up to it, the shootings in the military processing center were not the actions of a sane stable person. Hasan cracked under the duress of hearing the stories of atrocities in the war told to him day after day.

By the military's own admissions, this war is taking a tremendous mental toll on soldiers. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety over deployment, suicide, and domestic violence are all at very high levels in the military. (More next issue)

Racism is also to blame. The military has always used racism to dehumanize its victims. Anti-Arab racism is tacitly approved. Derogatory names for Arabs are the norm. Racist cadence and banter by the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and acceptance of racist comments by lower-rank enlisted soldiers drill disgustingly negative views of Arabs into the heads of soldiers.

The U.S, Chinese, Russians, and European bosses all have a stake in these wars. The Arab capitalists are maneuvering to protect their own interests by aligning with different sides. All sides are using a toxic mix of nationalism, patriotism and religion to motivate young men and women to kill for capitalism. Wars like this are how the bosses fight each other over resources and the "right" to exploit workers.

The profit system itself stands guilty of all the murders, from Texas to the Mid-East to Central Asia

The mental toll comes from soldiers committing atrocities for a cause they don't believe in. In the history of modern warfare, the two militaries that suffered the least mental breakdowns were the Soviet and German armies in World War II. Those armies were politically committed, the Soviets to Socialism, and the Germans to Fascism.

A big reason for the mental health problems among U.S. soldiers is because — despite the rhetoric about "protecting our country" or "helping" people in Afghanistan and Iraq — inside the military most soldiers know what this war is really about: oil. Fighting for that lie takes its toll.

Nidal Hasan is neither the first or last person to be driven crazy by a system that kills millions for profits. PLP is organizing for communist revolution and a society without bosses and profits, run by workers and for the needs of the working class all over the world. Join us! ✪

Oil-Driven Rulers Urge Afghan Surge, While Readying Nukes

Thus far, 4,400 GIs have given their lives for U.S. imperialism in Iraq and more than 900 in Afghanistan, besides the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, Afghans and Pakistanis who have been killed in this imperialist drive for control of oil (see box). The majority of the U.S. and allied (mainly British) Afghan losses have come in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, along the route of the proposed U.S.-backed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline.

Now civilian and GI deaths are sure to soar with Obama's coming surge. "Advisers to President Obama are preparing three options for escalating the war effort in Afghanistan, all of them calling for more American troops... The options include Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's request for roughly another 40,000 troops; a middle scenario sending about 30,000 more troops; and a lower alternative involving 20,000 to 25,000." (NY Times, 11/08/09)

U.S. War Planners Aim 'Low-Yield' High-Death Nukes at N. Korea, Iran, China

But even beyond the carnage of their Iraq and Afghan wars, U.S. rulers contemplate near-term use of their nuclear trump card. The Obama administration is currently overhauling U.S. nuclear policy, with a final determination due next year. To sway the decision, the latest issue of "Foreign Affairs," journal of the predominantly Rockefeller-led Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) features an article entitled "The Nukes We Need." Written by Pentagon-funded academics Keir Leiber and Daryl Press, it warns:

"Unless the world's major disputes are resolved — for example, on the Korean Peninsula, across the Taiwan Strait, and around the Persian Gulf — or the U.S. military pulls back from these regions, the United States will sooner or later find itself embroiled in conventional wars with nuclear-armed adversaries... The threats that dominate U.S. military planning come from China, North Korea, and Iran." (These threats target Asian and Mid-Eastern populations, just as did the U.S. racist murder of 250,000 Japanese civilians in the 1945 atomic bombings.)

Dog-eat-dog imperialist conflict dictates that "even rational adversaries will have powerful incentives to introduce nuclear weapons...during a conventional war against the United States."

Thus, the authors argue, Obama should have his finger on the nuclear trigger. "The least bad option in the face of explicit nuclear threats or after a limited nuclear strike may be a counterforce attack [on enemy nuke sites]...with either conventional or nuclear weapons, or a mix of the two." Keir and Leiber "modeled low-yield [nuclear] airbursts rather than high-yield groundbursts," on the "theory" that exploding nukes in the air will kill less than ground-level explosions.

Miraculously, "their fatality estimates plunged from 3-4 million to less than 700." In reality, the higher figures seem more likely. The CFR war planners count on impossibly precise intelligence on the location of hostile nuke bases. But the U.S.'s vaunted intelligence services can't find Osama bin Laden and didn't have a clue about "ally" Pakistan's A-bomb program. Instead of precision strikes, expect a radioactive holocaust.

Exxon Mobil Poised to Cash in on U.S. Genocide In Iraq, the new Saudi Arabia

Estimates of Iraq's oil wealth continue to skyrocket. The Council on Foreign Relations foretold six million barrels per day (bpd) in its 2002 pro-invasion report. This summer, Iraq and the world's oil majors (headed by U.S. Exxon Mobil and Chevron, UK British Petroleum, and Dutch-UK-U.S. Shell) talked of eight million bpd. But now, industry newsletter Energy Intelligence (11/06/09) reports, "All involved in Iraq's colossal expansion program say it's technically feasible to crank the fields up to 10 million bpd... allowing Iraq to rival top exporter Saudi Arabia."

Recent oil dealings proved the petrostrategic, inter-imperialist essence of the Bush-Obama war in Iraq. According to Reuters (11/05/09), "An Exxon Mobil-led consortium has beaten rival Russian, French and Chinese groups to secure initial rights to develop Iraq's West Qurna field," one of the world's largest. West Qurna stands to pump some 2.3 million bpd more than 30% greater than Exxon Mobil's current sales.

The deaths at Ft. Hood, in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and U.S. rulers' open threat to use nuclear weapons, all cry out for rebuilding a working-class anti-imperialist war movement with a revolutionary outlook. Only a mass PLP, based among workers, soldiers and students, can point our class in the direction of communist revolution, the answer to the horrors perpetrated by U.S. and world capitalism.✪

D.C. Transit Workers Prepare for Action

WASHINGTON, DC, November 9 — On November 4, the arbitration award was announced settling the contract for Metro transit workers (Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689). It grants a 9.3% raise over four years, but a substantial increase in health care costs will eat up much of that "raise." The award also eliminates retiree health insurance for workers hired after January 1, 2010, creating still another division in the workforce.

While this was our worst contract in over a decade, the bosses immediately declared it was "too good" for the workers and have gone to court to overturn it. The New York City transit bosses are following the same tactic in "appealing" the arbitration award there.

The union president's response was to take Metro to court to have the arbitration award enforced. When angry workers called for a strike, her main response was, "I'm not going to jail." But a union leader must be prepared to do whatever is necessary to represent, mobilize and lead the workers when we're attacked.

Rank-and-file workers are aiming for a mass demonstration at the November 19 Metro Board of Directors meeting. Amid much confusion, one worker asked, "What are we fighting for? Should we fight to have a bad arbitration award enforced?"

Members and friends of PLP are trying to advance the fight on many levels. Workers want and need a decent pay raise, cuts in the racist wage-progression system — which lowers entry-level wages for the mostly black youth comprising the newly-hired — and lower health insurance costs. But above all, we need a movement exposing the nature of the racist profit system and to show both the need and possibilities for communist revolution.

This struggle has erupted weeks away from electing a new local president. PLP member and 30-year bus driver Mike Golash is running to regain the presidency and lead the workers in sharper struggle against the capitalist crisis. A job action in Metro could build support for similar actions in NYC. These struggles can open the doors to transit workers joining a fighting PLP. (Full story next issue.) ✪

National Strike in Mexico

Mexico City, Nov 11 — The call for a national strike to repeal the presidential decree that destroyed the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union (SME) and sent 44,000 workers out into the street is being supported by hundreds of organizations. Thousands of workers, students and farm workers started in the early morning hours confronting the police to take over and temporarily close the main roads that come into Mexico City from Puebla, Queretaro, Toluca, and Pachuca. Also, starting Tuesday night, students from UNAM took over some installations and today they expect that other unions, mass organizations and farm workers, college, universities and grade school students and teachers will join the strike. This afternoon they await the main marches and mobilizations to meet in the Zocolo, the square in downtown Mexico City.

This struggle is linked to the international capitalist crisis and the sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry. The bosses are repressing, exploiting, and killing the working class. This is the opportunity to expose capitalism and its sellout, reformist, and opportunist leaders. At the same time, it's a great opportunity to fight for the revolutionary communist ideas of PLP. (Full story next issue) ✪

OUR FIGHT

✯Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.

✯Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.

✯Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✯Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society's benefits and burdens.

✯Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✯Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.

✯Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.

✯Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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Workers Put Brakes on UAW-Ford Contract Gang-up

CHICAGO, IL, November 1 — "I am so proud of my coworkers. We really exposed the UAW leadership and their level of collaboration with the bosses!" declared a 30-year black Ford worker. He was describing his feelings about almost 75% of Ford workers overwhelmingly rejecting the UAW leadership's latest attempt to force auto workers to pay for the current capitalist crisis.

This was the fifth time in five years that the UAW had tried to force more concessions on an ever-shrinking workforce. UAW President Gettlefinger said, "We underestimated the fatigue…of people constantly having to make a decision on a contract." (Translation: "Workers are tired of this shit!") He also added that it wasn't a bad contract; "We just didn't do a good job selling it to our membership." (Or selling them out.)

Ford wanted the same deal Obama and the UAW worked out with GM and Chrysler during their brief bankruptcies: a no-strike clause, a wage-freeze for new hires entering the workforce at about $12/hour, and the consolidation of many job classifications. In "return," Ford offered the vague promise of maintaining 7,000 jobs. Wages and working conditions would be set by binding arbitration, sidestepping the rank-and-file ratification process.

Another worker at the rebellious UAW Local 551 meeting at the Chicago Ford Assembly Plant warned, "If we agree to that, we're signing off our basic rights as workers. We can never let that happen!"

A worker laid off last January stunned the packed meeting when she said, "I'm going to wear my fancy UAW local 551 jacket, take my two kids and get my picture taken on the welfare line." She explained that laid-off workers were promised $500-a-week from Ford, for 26 weeks, if their Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) ran out. Instead, she is getting a check for $5.63! "How do you expect us to survive?" she shouted at the leadership.

These attacks have a profound racist character. Racist unemployment for black males in the former auto centers of Detroit, Buffalo and Milwaukee is over 50%! Foreclosures and evictions among black workers from Flint to Chicago's South Side are in the tens of thousands. And the shrinking tax base created by massive unemployment and low wages has left the schools and mass transit in shambles. In Detroit, bus fares are going up 30% on December 1 while routes and weekend service are cancelled.

No sooner had the UAW contract been rejected than Ford announced a $1-BILLION third-quarter profit, a more than 2% gain in U.S. market share. The Detroit Free Press called this "an incredible $3-billion turnaround in North American operating profit." There's no doubt that Gettlefinger and VP Bob King — the inside favorite to replace Gettlefinger this June — knew about Ford's improved fortunes while they were trying to ram through even more concessions. The UAW's loyalty to the bosses is a bottomless pit.

For workers, there is no end in sight to the current crisis as racist unemployment soars and plant closings and wage cuts continue. But workers' fight-back seems to be increasing: from the 11-month Stella D'Oro strike in NY to the '07 Boeing strike, various transit and healthcare rallies and this latest rejection of a U.S. auto contract. A big part of our job is, wherever possible, to fan these sparks into flames and flames into fires. At the Chicago Ford meeting, some of the most militant leadership came from workers who are long-time CHALLENGE readers and have participated in many actions, from the Jena 6 rally in 2006 to PLP May Day marches and dinners.

These battles can become schools for communism if we use them to deepen our ties to the workers and win them to see the need for communist revolution and building a mass, fighting PLP. Adding their experience, knowledge and boldness to our ranks makes us a much stronger Party. Victories like those are much harder to reverse. ✪

Fight Racist Cook County Healthcare Cut-backs

CHICAGO, IL, October 25 — With almost 50 million uninsured and racist unemployment at a 60-year high, Cook County Health Services CEO Foley and the new System Board, are slashing services and cutting jobs at a breathtaking pace. There are over 1 million uninsured workers in Cook County, and growing every day with plant closings and layoffs. These cuts are racist to the core as 82% of the patients we care for are black or immigrant workers. It is the second wave after the cuts of 2007 that closed half the clinics for uninsured workers and eliminated 2,000 jobs.

While the bosses carry out their charade in Washington over health care, Democrats are running everything from the White House and Congress to the City and County governments in Chicago and Cook County. On the ground, this is what the reality is. With trillions going to expand the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and soon Pakistan and Iran, and with billions going to save the bankers, Barack Obama's adopted South Side of Chicago shows the real future the bosses have in store for us.

Foley and his henchmen who represent the bailed-out bankers propose eliminating all in-patient care at 2 out of 3 public hospitals in the overwhelmingly black South Side of Chicago. What once existed as a "public option" for uninsured, poor workers will now include $10-$50 for visits plus charges on prescriptions, if you can afford increasing bus fare to get to your appointments! More than 300 County health care workers have received termination letters, with hundreds more still to come.

On the wards, anger runs high! PLP members and some of the most militant workers are calling for a demonstration in front of the hospital. The unions, SEIU, AFSCME, the Doctors SEIU Local and the nurses' union have kept the workers largely in the dark about the cuts and lay-offs, while PLP has been the first to inform the workers, raising the need for communist revolution and calling for a rally in front of the hospital on Nov. 4. Many workers support our call and began making more copies of the County CHALLENGE PLP newsletter.

The unions are doing very little. The angrier the workers get, the less the union leadership does. They fear workers who want to make some real changes and take on leadership themselves. It's situations like this where the sellouts show their true colors and the Party's outlook rings true for the workers we are in struggle with. As this class struggle heats up, we have to be bolder and more militant, while keeping our "eyes on the prize" of building the Party, increasing the number of CHALLENGE readers and distributors, and trying to move workers and patients closer to and into the PLP. This is the real victory for the workers, for our patients, and for our class!

We are trying to mobilize all areas of the Party to play a role. A community group linked to our PLP health care club has signed on to support and build for our demonstration. We have been building with the SK Tool workers who have been on strike since August because their boss cut their healthcare coverage and will try and connect the struggles. We will unite County workers with CTA bus operators who just received 1,000 lay-off pink slips and with our public school teachers and students who already know the effects of "privatization." There are a series of town hall meetings organized by the fascist governing board that we plan on shutting down. ✪

Open to PL's Red Ideas on Battling School Budget Cuts

BERKELEY, CA, Oct. 24 — Over 400 students, teachers, and professors gathered from across California at a conference to "Defend Public Education" to make a plan of action against the budget cuts that have severely affected education and health care. PLP distributed a pamphlet calling for a political strike against the system that cuts education to pay for war, and advocating communist revolution. We distributed CHALLENGE to many participants.

The leaders of the conference channeled debates to discussions of tactics and dates rather than the nature and source of the crisis and the solutions. They imposed a "one-minute rule" which made it very hard to fight for our ideas as effectively as possible. But the stakes are high because, while the leaders sought to stop serious discussion, there was great anger at the racist cuts — which will freeze out a disproportionately large number of lower-income black and Latino students — and an understanding by many that these cuts are an attack on the whole working class. This is fertile ground. If we plant the right seeds and cultivate them with lots of care, the results will be more organizers for communist revolution.

Within the limits of the one-minute rule, we pointed out in the general assembly that while we need to build unity against the system carrying out the racist cuts, capitalist public education itself has a strategic flaw: the capitalist legislature controls it and its capitalist budget and runs it for the interests of the capitalists. They push their ideas that defend the same system that trains people for war, along with the racism that puts more black and Latino youth in prisons than in college.

The depth of the crisis means there will be cuts. That's why our goal needs to be to get rid of capitalism with revolution. We argued that this is a long-term fight that requires us to reach out to students and workers in all areas. Others raised that the budget cuts were helping fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and that imperialist war and bailouts of banks were the priorities of the ruling class.

Many students overwhelmingly supported a general

continued on p. 4

Capitalist Killer: Soaring Racist Unemployment

While U.S. rulers kill millions of workers and their families in imperialist oil wars, they are ravaging tens of millions of unemployed in the U.S., directly causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands (if not millions). This is even truer for black and Latino workers because of racist discrimination, a legacy reaching back to slavery. There are probably well over 35 million workers who cannot find full-time civilian employment in this supposedly world's richest country.

Unemployment is built into the profit system. The bosses use it to force lower wages and benefits, and to try to limit workers' fight back. There has never been full employment under capitalism, nor can there be. It is a system in which produciton is not planned, where every capitalist tries to capture as much of the market as possible to stay ahead of competitors. Then overproduction is inevitable, forcing many bosses to contract production or go bankrupt, laying off millions.

This endless cycle will continue until the working class, led by the communist PLP, overthrows this hellish system and the bosses' state power. Then we'll establish a society in which workers share the full value that they alone produce, collectively distributing it according to need.

How Figures Don't Lie But Liars Can Figure

The latest government unemployment figures only reinforce this sick character of capitalism. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports an "official" rate of joblessness at 10.2%, representing nearly 16 million workers, the BLS and the media are finally highlighting the fact that the real percentage is 17.5% — which includes part-time workers who cannot find full-time jobs plus "discouraged" workers who have given up looking for non-existent jobs. And even that is not the whole truth.

The BLS itself admits that in 2009 it has overstated employment by about one million jobs. Statistician John Williams (shadowstats.com) believes that it's closer to two million illusory jobs. The latter says the real jobless percentage in September, 2009, was 21.3%, which is more than twice October's "official" 10.2%. And even that is still not the whole truth.

These figures do not include hundreds of thousands of youth who joined the military because they could not find a job, victims of the "economic draft." And they do not include millions on welfare who would be working if there were jobs for them and day-care for their children. And they do not count at least half of the 2.4 million workers and youth in prisons who have been incarcerated for non-violent "crimes." If back in the workforce (as they are in many other capitalist countries) they would also be hard-pressed to find a job in this Great Depression II.

So the nearly 16 million jobless workers represented by the 10.2% "official" figure become approximately 33 million given the 21.3 percentage, which in turn totals well over 35 million when including the economic draftees, workers on welfare and those imprisoned, all of whom are denied full-time jobs in this capitalist crisis-ridden economy.

Double Jobless Rates for Black and Latino Workers

This situation is absolutely a Great Depression for black and Latino workers. The "official" jobless rate for black workers is 17.1%, which, when including the underemployed and "discouraged," is closer to 35%. For Latino workers, the "official" rate is 13.1%, meaning a true rate approaching 30%.

Meanwhile, teenagers overall have an "official" unemployment rate of 27.6%, which means, considering all the other above factors, more than half of job-seeking youth are on the streets.

Killing the Jobless

A 1976 Congressional study attempting to "estimate the cost in human suffering of people being out of work" (NY Times, 10/31/76), concluded that every 1.4% rise in unemployment in 1970, led directly to the death of over 30,000 workers in the next five years from stress-related ailments, suicide and homicide. So even taking the 10.2% "official" jobless rate, that would kill over 200,000 workers in the next five years. And given the real unemployment rate, there would be far more deaths (not to mention the death rate for unemployed youth who joined the military for a "job" in Iraq or Afghanistan). Of course, this pales before the millions of workers killed in those two countries by U.S. imperialist wars.

The brutality of unemployment under capitalism contrasts sharply with what happened in the communist-led socialist society in the Soviet Union during world capitalism's Great Depression in the 1930s. Unemployment was ZERO in the profit-free USSR during that period.

It's Not Obama (Or Bush) — It's Capitalism

In attempting to get the profit system off the hook as the cause of this depression (and make himself look blameless), Obama is pointing to Bush administration policies as creating this crisis. But Obama and Bush both represent capitalism, a system which moves from boom to bust, from recessions to "bubbles" to depressions. There is only one way to end mass racist unemployment and all the evils it produces: destroy the bosses, profits and the wars the imperialists embark on to "solve" their crises. Only a PLP-led communist revolution can accomplish this. Then the working class — which creates all value — will control society, its state and production. Join us! ✪

A Phony 'Silver Lining': 'Rising Wages'!

Amid all this horrendous unemployment, the rulers' media points to "a bright spot" — "rising wages"! "The average hourly wage for rank-and-file workers," reports the NY Times (11/7), "actually accelerated in October."

Of course, this statistic conveniently omits the "wages" of the tens of millions of unemployed and underemployed. Jobless benefits run about half of a worker's previous weekly wage. And only about 40% of the labor force is even eligible for unemployment insurance.

So in talking about "the average hourly wage for rank-and-file workers," why not include the millions of jobless? Their "hourly wage" is down to ZERO. If that were counted into the overall "average" for the working class, wage figures would be in free-fall.

Millions of workers are suffering losses in savings, homes and pensions. Whatever these workers won in past class struggles is taken away every time the capitalist system produces a crisis in which the workers take the losses. That's why PLP says workers cannot win a decent life for themselves and their children through trying to reform this profit system. Only communist revolution can do the job.

Student Strikes Spread Across Austria, Germany



VIENNA, AUSTRIA, November 5 — "The university is burning!" has been the name given to massive strikes and demonstrations which began here two weeks ago when thousands occupied universities. They have now spread across the country and into Germany. On October 28, 50,000 university and high school students took to the streets here. In Berlin, 20,000 demonstrated, part of 100,000 nation-wide. International unity has marked the movement, with German students welcomed here and German-born and Turkish students joining together in anti-racist unity in Nuremberg, Germany.

The students in both countries are demanding abolition of fees, free education, more funding for schools instead of for banks, a 50% rule for women staffing, "more democracy" in running the universities, higher wages for public school teachers and increased hiring. The movement is an inspiration for students worldwide to organize strikes for their demands.

However, there is no communist leadership in this upsurge, which could point out that under capitalism the ruling class controls and uses education for its profit-making purposes and will never allow students any "democracy" to run the universities or public schools. Only a communist society run by the working class would insure that education serves our class, not profit-driven bosses and bankers. ✪

Battle Budget Cuts

continued from p. 3

strike which was proposed by students from San Francisco State. When a professor tried to water down the politics of this strike, asking whether it should be a general strike for education and public service, people screamed "no! general strike," and it was clarified that it meant having people from all sectors join in the struggle. The majority of the room applauded. It was decided to have a statewide action on March 4th, despite our struggles to plan actions for May 1st, International Workers Day.

We said that May Day should be a day of protest for the whole working class as in the past, that it should be part of a Spring offensive linking the attacks on students and workers here to the expanding wars and the massive prison population. There are more people in prison in California per capita than peacetime Nazi Germany. This is a fascist state. We said that it's probable that the bombs of World War III have already started falling, which is another reason we should fight for a revolutionary May 1st.

The anger of students and teachers at this conference led many to show open interest in our ideas. However, we should have brought more people and been better organized. We underestimated the difficulty of doing the work with the imposition of the one-minute rule. We plan to be bolder on campuses and schools to deepen the fight for a communist society so that education, production and all of society will meet the needs of the working class. ✪

Iran: Workers' Misery Worsens As Bosses Fight It Out

The protestors who took to the streets of Iran's cities this summer, responding to the political games played by the ruling clerics and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, are making the same deadly mistake their parents made 30 years ago: following leaders as bad as the fascists they are rebelling against. It's as true in Iran as it is anywhere: every faction of the ruling class, while appearing to be different, is essentially a parasite on the backs of workers, sucking away our lives for their profit.

In 1969, students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Millions took to the streets to celebrate the closing of the "nest of spies." Iranians had (and have) many reasons to hate U.S. imperialism, including U.S. oil companies draining the country of billions of dollars per year while most Iranians were dirt poor. The U.S. also propped up the Shah, whose infamous Savak secret police tortured anti-Shah activists.



The protestors accepted the leadership of the religious fanatic Ayatollah Khomeini. Mistakenly believing that anyone was better than the Shah, many workers, including militant oil-field workers, backed the Ayatollah. (Actually oil-worker strikes were the main factor in forcing out the Shah, something the clerics try to hide.) In fact, the clerics who took over were medieval fascists at least as bad as the Shah. Soon Iran was engaged in what would be an 8-year war with Iraq in which over 300,000 died, including thousands of children used to clear mine-fields.

The Iranian working class paid the price for this mistake. As oppression and exploitation continued, many workers came to hate the current fascist dictators. The popular anger directed toward the clerics broke out into the open during this spring's presidential election campaign.

Seeing that the "Green Movement" protests were going beyond election politics to reject the clerics themselves, a faction of the Iranian ruling class broke away from the crude and arrogant president Ahmadinejad and present "supreme leader" Khamenei. This Green Movement included a former prime minister (Musavi), a former speaker of parliament (Karubi), and a former president (Khatami). Their agenda is to reform and thereby strengthen the ruling class in Iran.

Unfortunately, many Iranian workers in the Green Movement also have illusions about Obama and U.S. imperialism. They figure that if the clerical leaders hate the U.S., then the latter must be pretty good. But, in fact, the rabid nationalists in small-time powers like Iran are often bitter opponents of U.S. imperialism because they want to reap for themselves the profits from exploiting the working class, rather than seeing U.S. companies take the lion's share. Hugo Chavez is playing the same game in Venezuela, trying to oust U.S. bosses in order to enrich his ruling-class allies.

Ironically Obama reversed long-standing U.S. policy of trying to overturn the Islamic Republic, instead returning to the Reagan-era option of dealing with the clerical fascists. Then U.S. rulers wanted a common front against their Soviet rivals; now the issue is Iran giving up its nuclear weapons program in return for acceptance of the Islamic Republic.

Bush had talked about regime change, confident that popular protests would bring to power liberals eager to ally with U.S. imperialism. Obama thought that Bush was over-reaching because the clerics were too entrenched. This looked like a good call in early 2009, but now, given the summer protests, looks like much less of a sure thing. Obama is stuck with the policy he decided on; endorsing the protests would look like he's returning to the Bush plan. So Obama continues to focus on dealing with the clerics while doing his best to ignore the protestors who adore him and the U.S.

Fifty years ago Iran had one of the world's largest communist parties that was not in power. The Shah smashed that. Thirty years ago, Iran had a whole variety of popular movements and parties inspired by Marxism-Leninism. The clerics smashed them. In both cases, these parties were fundamentally flawed by their reformism and nationalism – what we call "revisionism" — because it revises the revolutionary essence of Marxism-Leninism. The gallery of Green Movement leaders listed above proves that they are totally pro-capitalist.

Leaders dedicated to preserving capitalist rule will never meet the needs of workers. Many of the protestors are angry about the grinding poverty of the working class, demanding reforms like higher wages and less corruption. At the moment, there is no communist leadership to turn these protests into the preparatory steps toward revolution and workers' dictatorship.

Meanwhile, the clerical fascists will likely succeed at suppressing the liberal protests: liberal leaders are not willing to take up arms. And the clerics will continue to press against the U.S. and for nuclear weapons, attempting to become a big power in the Middle East. Iran, however, lies above the world's second largest known reserves of oil, too tempting a prize for imperialists like the U.S., Russia or China to ignore. So the most likely forecast for Iran is war and fascism. ✪

Colombia: Appearance of Progress, Essence of Exploitation

The Colombian government has planned to turn its capital city, Bogotá, into an international business center. To do so, it is implementing infrastructural projects to make the city more "attractive" to investors. This lucrative deal for big capital, paid by Colombians' taxes, is in reality a nightmare for thousands of workers and their families.

Transmilenio, the company that monopolized the transportation system in major cities, turning them into concrete hells and causing the homelessness of thousands of workers, now is getting ready to build a subway system that will increase the taxes of the working class. This project has already taken away the homes of thousands of families who were forced to "sell" to the state at ridiculously low prices and now wander the streets looking for apartments they cannot effort. Street vendors were evicted because, according to the government, they made the city "ugly," and were the cause of crime and lack of safety.

But now, old housing is going to be demolished to build modern units to be rented at higher prices, to benefit the big chain stores and rich merchants. This hurts many families who lived off maquila production and retail and will lose their jobs. These small vendors are always harassed, manipulated and coerced by cops and politicians, who seek their votes but who, once elected, turn against them to the benefit of their own businesses.

This time, things are not any different, and we are beginning to see the emergence of opportunists who come to offer every kind of legal and peaceful solution, of course. There are those who speak of the love of God, and those who argue that the government will provide subsidies for relocations, as it has done in the past. There are many who no longer believe in promises, see that capitalism is a dictatorship of misery, and are searching for other forms of struggle against these genocidal policies.

PLP and CHALLENGE are in the thick of things, arguing for unity and revolutionary organization. We argue that the elimination of salaries and private property will put an end to worrying about paying rent, taxes or public services. The mansions, cathedrals, offices and commercial centers, now used by capitalists, will be refurbished to address our need for housing, encouraging us to fight knowing that by changing this racist and individualist system, and replacing it with communism, we'll put an end to all injustices.

To build a communist future for our class join PLP! ✪

LETTERS

Religion Excuses Bosses' Murder

The essence of life is struggle, not a god. Recently, two events enabled the political development of a group of friends: the death of the brother of a comrade and of the brother of a friend. This opened a discussion about religion and the health care system in Mexico.

One death was caused by the racist lack of medical equipment in an indigenous marginal community and the other by the exploitation and terrible working conditions for minors. A child died because of an electric shock and the other now lives as a vegetable without an arm and unable to speak or walk.

These incidents are only two examples of a system that kills our working class in every corner of the world. However, the capitalist system has taken charge of telling us that death is "natural" because that's how god wanted it. That's why the majority of people in both situations commented that god had allowed these situations to make us see that we're nothing in the world and that our destiny is in the hands of god.

However, as communists we can't stay quiet. The pain can get into our deepest thoughts. But dialectics helps us to understand and able to express to our friends that these deaths were not caused by god's will. In an open and convincing way we said that god doesn't exist, that man only sees god because of the poverty and need in which he lives. Material need under capitalism induces many to have faith in something that doesn't exist, in this case a god, and material abundance makes us thank god. The bosses take advantage of this ignorance to dominate and exploit the working class.

That night our friends commented on what happened, and how we saw the deaths. The next day one of them, who is a CHALLENGE reader, asked several questions. Later he commented that, for him and another friend, these things have made them doubt the existence of god and many other things and situations, and that they are confused. It's encouraging to know that the seed of communism is growing in every person we know and that we only have to cultivate it.

Young comrade in Mexico

Capitalism is Bad for Workers' Health

Lately work has been killing me, literally. This past summer I got pneumonia from working too many double shifts in a diesel exhaust-filled environment. Then last week I got a viral infection from the same thing. And tonight, per usual my back is bothering me again. These phony politicians yammer on about healthcare reform, but they don't give a crap about workers' health. Every day our jobs are hurting us, from industrial workers breathing in killer fumes to teachers getting bladder problems from holding it in too long. We need communism more than ever to give workers the power to change these things, and go see a doctor without worrying about sick time!

A Sick Red

H.S. Students are Inspiring Organizers

It has been an inspiring week in my school. A month after a student told me that she wanted to organize a protest; PL led a loud and militant action in front of the UFT Delegate Assembly. The students linked arms to secure our speakers from the kkkops and made two speeches that condemned the budget cuts, how they exist because of the war, and how the U.S. military is the largest contributor to Global Warming.

Two days later when the student who organized the protest and I were discussing it and the trip to Harper's Ferry, another student came into my classroom and declared that she organized over a hundred people to go to Boston to help keep a hospital from closing. I gave her all the CHALLENGES that I had and she agreed to distribute them up there.

I asked her to write something for CHALLENGE. She wrote this:

It was a cloudy Saturday afternoon in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and students organized to fight for the hospital they were born in, Lowell General Hospital. Objects were being thrown. Students showed their anger with tears, while curses never heard on the face of the earth were said to police officers. "I have only been in two protests in my life, but this was the most breathtaking," said Lowell resident Priscilla Lara. She was also born in Lowell General.

People think that just because we, the teenagers, are not legally adults, we don't have a voice to fight for what we believe in. Well, guess what? We fought back. We cried, we screamed, and we made sure our voices were heard:

VIVA LA PAZ

VIVA LA GUERRA DE CLASE

VIVA LA REVOLUCION!

Needless to say, PLP continues to grow and provide leadership to the students and teachers at this school, yet never fails to be inspired and awestruck at the sheer potential within these children of the proletariat.

Red Teacher

Today I Saw the Party and Felt Our Potential

I would have failed to bring students to a rally today if it weren't for the work of another comrade. Working with a friend of one of my students, he ensured that three students from my school were able to attend and participate in the rally. Many members of PLP brought youth.

The phony leftists were there, looking like the old and decrepit parasites that they are, attempting to leech off others. One group brought some youth, but only ours were leading chants, distributing fliers, and fighting back.

It was great that a comrade's activities in one school could really help the work in my school grow and develop. It's a great time to be a communist, as the three students that I brought read the paper, two for the first time, and really liked it. They are looking forward to doing more things with us in the future.

The three students were given fliers by a veteran comrade, and they quickly fell into doing Party work. Though they were a bit nervous at first, they handed them out to everyone they came into contact with. They led some chants on a bullhorn. We were given the bullhorn because the students and I were being so spirited in our chants. We made plans to meet up with the other comrade and his students to see the movie, "Capitalism: A Love Story."

After that rally, the students were willing to meet uptown for an additional rally. After having a good discussion on communism, we all headed home. I have a renewed determination to destroy capitalism due to the inspiration of seeing our youth and Party in action.

Red Teacher

Michael Moore's Movie: 'Here we go again…"

Several friends and I went to see Michael Moore's new movie. Moore powerfully attacks the inequalities of capitalism. I found myself applauding in agreement enthusiastically as Moore attacks capitalist vultures like AIG, Citibank, Goldman Sachs, AT&T, Bank of America and Wal-Mart.

But at the end of the movie, I replied "Here we go again," as Moore implored us to put our faith in Roosevelt, Obama and democracy to reform capitalism. I don't think so!

There are some very moving moments in the movie. "My family lived in this house for years; we always paid our bills and now our home is being repossessed by the bank. Sometimes I'd like to kill those people," stated an Oklahoma farmer.

In a more hopeful moment, Moore shows the militant sit-in strike of the workers at the Windows and Door factory in Chicago. They won a cash settlement from the Bank of America after the support of thousands of workers.

See "Capitalism, A Love Story." It will lead to lots of discussion and ultimately our answer… communist revolution.

Stockton Movie Club

Songs, Poems, Spoken Word: Weapons in the Class Struggle

The Stella D'Oro Bakery in the Bronx was closed October 8, perhaps for the last time. In the shadow of the elevated subway train, a rally of workers and supporters gathered outside the bakery. Workers were brought together and spirits roused by the sounds of "Rise Again," a revolutionary song led by a member of PLP. Two workers asked for copies of the song, and about 35 copies were also given to other workers.

This was not the first time in the past year where revolutionary songs, and other forms of such culture have played a role in helping to build class struggle and PLP. In December 2008, a successful holiday party was organized for the children of striking Stella D'Oro workers. It was wonderful to see children (and some parents) playing musical chairs to the live sounds of "Señor Inversionista," and "Bella Ciao." Several PLP songs were sung to an appreciative audience of strikers and their supporters. The songs lifted spirits while conveying aspects of the Party's ideas.

In the spring, some PL members sang at a fund-raising concert for the same striking workers. As we sang "The Internationale" most of the audience stood with fists held high, many singing along; some were enthralled, hearing and responding for the first time to this classic working-class anthem. Since then, at several support rallies, we sang our 'Stella D'Oro' version of "Which Side Are You On," a famous song of strikers' struggle and defiance.

A recent evening of songs, poetry and spoken word involved, inspired and informed the multi-ethnic audience of over 100 people about a legal case against anti-immigrant racism and a related act of police brutality. The program was enriched by the variety of styles, the powerfully sharp messages, the diverse backgrounds and political mix of performers, including several PL members. Among the performers was a Stella D'Oro Bakery worker and an active strike supporter who, in Spanish and English, read a Pablo Neruda poem, El Gran Mantel (The Great Tablecloth).

We should increase our efforts in creating and using culture as a weapon, in concert with base-building and engaging in class struggle. Efforts have begun to rebuild a culture committee and to record songs, in varied genres, for a new PLP album. If you have songs to be included, please email desafio.challenge@gmail.com.

PL Singer



'Capitalism: A Love Story'

A Movie in Love with 'Reforming' Capitalism

Our Study Action Group saw Michael Moore's movie, "Capitalism: A Love Story." Why did the bosses allow this pseudo-anti-capitalist movie in theaters? Because Moore "criticizes" capitalism while reinforcing liberal capitalist ideology and supporting its "commander-in-chief" Barack Obama. Moore puts his hero Obama on a pedestal as representing a people's fight-back movement that defeated the bad guys — the Republicans Bush and Reagan. He blames Bush for the bailouts, ignoring Obama's doling out more hundreds of billions once in office.

Moore praised Franklin Roosevelt's "second bill of rights" (which was never adopted) yet did not once mention the U.S. Communist Party's role in the 1930s in fighting racism and in organizing the mass production industries. That's what produced what passes for "the American standard of living" which Roosevelt used in his "bill of rights."

Moore's only reference (implied) to communism was as "the other 'ism'" and in depicting troops marching. He closed with a Sinatra-esque rendition (over the final credits) of the communist "Internationale" (which most movie-goers would not recognize) adapted to U.S. issues.

Moore says nothing about imperialism, which capitalism spawns. He ignores the union sellouts' role in the demise of the labor movement. And in promoting the European social-democratic welfare state as "better than" U.S. capitalism, he also ignores the mass layoffs and anti-immigrant racism there.

Moore advances a monumental historical lie in saying that the National Guard was ordered out in the 1936 great Flint sit-down strike against GM to "protect the strikers from police attacks." (!) They were there to take the plants back from the workers, and were prevented only by the sit-downers' determination to destroy the company's billion-dollar machinery if attacked.

Moore's analysis of capitalism and class struggle is the same old formula of rich vs. poor. It lacks an understanding of capitalism as a class dictatorship where the bourgeoisie owns the means of production and uses the working class to extract surplus value — its profits — from our labor. Moore basically defines capitalism as greed.

He says "democracy" is the only hope to defeat unregulated capitalism. One member of our group shouted out that he had already disproved "democracy" 30 minutes earlier when he showed Congress as not stopping the bailouts because the ruling class had decided to keep them. This abstract term "democracy" hides the true nature of the bosses' dictatorship which allows us to choose our masters' mouthpiece once every so many years. "Democracy" means voting according to the bosses' rules and for one or another of their politicians.

The audience reacted strongly to images of evictions, the "dead peasant insurance" — companies insuring its workers while making themselves the beneficiaries when the workers die — as well as the story of corruption and fraudulent incarceration of Wilkes Barre, PA's youth. They shouted, swore and agreed with much of the criticism of greed endemic to capitalism. Although the audience's anger at capitalism is positive, Moore does the bidding of the liberal wing of the ruling class, the major imperialists, as they seek to curb the excess short-run greed of maverick capitalists in order to win workers and youth to defending capitalism in the long-run, especially in a wartime economy.

One friend said she was angered by the white middle-class lens that permeated this film. Only white teenagers were depicted as being falsely incarcerated in a rural community, not the black and Latino working-class youth routinely harassed and murdered by the state. Moore also omitted the constant police brutality against black, Latino and undocumented workers. He carefully navigated around the bosses' need for racism to maintain capitalism.

He only portrayed the eviction of white families, though he did show a multi-racial (non-violent) struggle to keep a family in their home. This was the exception in the film, not the rule. The movie is clearly aimed at middle-class liberals and white and black workers who Obama needs for support.

Though the film doesn't provide a structured analysis of the failure of capitalism, it does place the word "capitalism" back into the discussion of what's wrong with the world.

Workers and students should see and discuss this movie with their friends and co-workers. It was entertaining, especially when Moore tried to make a "citizen's arrest" of the corporate big shots who pillaged the treasury via "bailouts" and he himself was threatened with arrest. This climactic moment can easily lead to a discussion of how workers' tribunals will arrest and punish the capitalists and their imperialist lackeys when our class has state power in a workers' dictatorship.

Moore's definition of "democracy" as a system where everyone can discuss what they need can only be realized through millions of workers fighting for a PLP-led communist revolution. ✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers. Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times

Immigration jail: No-help hellhole

NYT, 11/2 — A startling petition arrived at the New York City Bar Association in October 2008, signed by 100 men, all locked up without criminal charges in the middle of Manhattan.

In vivid if flawed English, it described cramped, filthy quarters where dire medical needs were ignored and hungry prisoners were put to work for $1 a day.

The petitioners were among 250 detainees imprisoned in an immigration jail. The Varick Street Detention Facility takes in 11,000 men a year, most of them long-time New Yorkers facing deportation without a lawyer.

Immigrant detainees, unlike criminal defendants, can be held without legal representation and moved from state to state without notice.

Volunteers, including lawyers from 16 corporate firms, say they can offer only rudimentary legal triage to a handful of detainees a week.

Yet a detainee from the former Soviet Union praised the jail. "Varick is heaven" compared with some county jails in New Jersey (Bergen and Monmouth) and Florida, he said, citing abuse by anti-immigrant guards.

A century-long line of Supreme Court decisions holds that immigration detention is not a punishment or deprivation of liberty, and does not require legal counsel for fundamental fairness.

Fascist Colombia prez is U.S. pal

GW, 10/23 — Under Uribe's rule the country has made impressive gains. But scratch the surface of the shiny new Colombia and enamel flakes away…

Scandals have felled dozens of senior allies and officials — illegal wiretaps, bribes and links to narco-traffickers and paramilitary death squads. The army slaughtered hundreds of slum-dwellers and dressed their corpses up to look like guerillas. And yet Uribe has emerged pleading innocence.

Uribe has risked journalists' lives by publicly accusing them of being terrorists, obliging them to flee before rightwing hit squads took the hint…. The message to investigative journalists was clear, expose wrongdoing by the state at your peril.

The lowlands are controlled by rightwing paramilitaries who quietly re-formed after a much-trumpeted demobilization…. Thousands of families live in shacks, too afraid to return to their farms, seized for palm oil plantations and protected by paramilitary thugs and government officials.

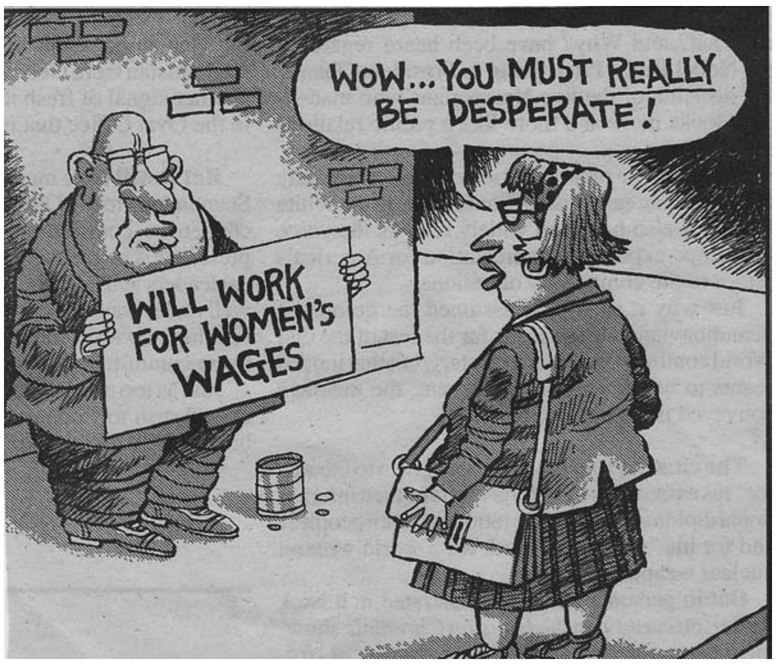
The U.S. regards Uribe as a key ally, a bulwark against not just leftist guerillas but South America's anti-Yankee tide.

Could oil pipeline be a motive?

Creators.com, 10/10 — Every once in a while, a statistic just jumps out at you in a way that makes everything else you hear on a subject seem beside the point, if not downright absurd. That was my reaction to the statement of the president's national security advisor, former Marine Gen. James Jones, concerning the size of the terrorist threat from Afghanistan:

"The al Qaeda presence is very diminished. The maximum estimate is less than 100 operating in the country, no bases, no ability to launch attacks on either us or our allies."

Less than 100! And he is basing his conservative estimate on the best intelligence data available to our government. That means that al Qaeda, for all practical purposes, does not exist in Afghanistan – so why are we having a big debate about sending even more troops to fight an enemy that has relocated elsewhere?



Racist poverty dooms many youth

MinutemanMedia.org, 9/25 — So many poor babies in rich America enter the world with multiple strikes against them: born without prenatal care, at low birth weight, with poor, poorly educated, and very young mothers and absent fathers. At crucial points in their development more risks pile on, making a successful transition to productive adulthood significantly less likely, and involvement in the criminal justice system significantly more likely.

Children with an incarcerated parent are more likely to become incarcerated. Black children are nearly nine times and Latino children are three times as likely as white children to have an incarcerated parent.

Black children are more than three times as likely as white children to be poor, and are four times as likely to live in extreme poverty. A poor black boy born in 2001 has a one-in-three chance of going to prison in his lifetime.

MORE ITEMS AVAILABLE ONLINE: www.plp.org

Thanksgiving: A Holocaust for Native Americans

In the United States, Thanksgiving is a holiday of family and food. But the politics of the holiday — taught to elementary school children across the U.S. — are a racist and patriotic lie, representing the holocaust for millions of Native Americans.

The Thanksgiving that colonial Puritans — a group of religious fundamentalists — practiced was originally thanking god for the slaughter of Native Americans by colonial swords and diseases. There were many such Thanksgivings.

In 1637 a faction of Puritans occupied an area that is now Connecticut with the aid of British and Dutch colonial forces. In the pre-dawn hours they slaughtered more than 700 adults and children of the Pequot Tribe, who had gathered for their annual Green Corn festival. The next morning the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony declared "A Day Of Thanksgiving" for the occupier's murder of the native population.

The truth about Thanksgiving helps us see the bosses' lies. Progressive Labor Party aims to smash their grip on our minds so that we can build a fighting mass anti-racist communist movement that ends the bosses' sexist, racist and genocidal system for good.

The Truth About Pilgrims and Indians

The "first" Thanksgiving dinner between "pilgrims" and "Indians," reenacted by the U.S. ruling class in schools and TV specials, was in 1621 between the Wampanoag — a confederation of several Native American groups located mainly in Massachusetts and Rhode Island — and a group of 121 English colonists led by 28 Puritans that landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Contrary to the idea that the colonists shared their food with the Wampanoags, the Puritans had too little to share. They only invited two natives, Squanto and Samoset, and sachem (tribal leader) Massasoit. They brought more than 90 fellow tribespeople as well as most of the food, in the egalitarian tradition of their communities. Whereas Wampanoag men and women ate together at the same time, Pilgrim women had to dine after their men were done, following their sexist Puritan tradition.

Without Squanto and Samoset, colonists would not have survived. Half of them died from diseases and starvation. The two taught the colonists how to fish, hunt, and grow crops. However, the Puritans regarded Native Americans as "heathens," and saw Squanto as "god's instrument" to help the "chosen" people, the pilgrims. Squanto had been captured more than 15 years earlier and brought to Europe, where he was taught English and became a Christian. When he returned to New England 14 years later, settled with the Pilgrims, aiding them not only in their survival, but in their campaigns against the Wampanoag.

An elder pilgrim gave a Thanksgiving sermon in 1623, two years after the Wampanoag saved them, thanking god for small pox killing Wampanoag "young men and children… thus clearing the forests to make way for a better growth."

A generation later, in 1676, colonists killed off the Wampanoag in a genocidal land grab — including decapitating sachem Metacom, son of sachem Massasoit. The Wampanoag actually won early campaigns against the Puritans in 1675, attacking more than 50 colonial towns and destroying 13. But the Wampanoag had been plagued by deadly diseases that cut their population more than 90% just before the arrival of the Puritans in 1621.

The spread of deadly diseases that came from continuous contact between Europeans and Native Americans was spurred by the colonialists' search for gold, slaves, trade and colonies — not romantic exploration. The Puritans, as well as Spanish, French and English occupiers, believed that "god" cleared natives out of the Americas for colonial settlement. Their ideas were supported by a religion that endorsed genocide and slavery.

Modern scientists speculate that frequent bathing, low population densities and few disease-transmitting livestock kept Native Americans healthy. But they generally had no natural or childhood immunity to diseases common in Europe, where dense populations bathed infrequently and were routinely exposed to disease-ridden livestock. Before disease — mainly smallpox — ravaged native communities, Massachusetts natives successfully drove off French colonists in 1606 and English colonists in 1607.

But in 1676 the English regrouped from their early defeats and went on to wipe out the Native Americans. After the colonialists' victory against Wampanoag they declared a "day of public Thanksgiving for the beginning of revenge upon the enemy." A generation after sachem Massasoit helped feed the "first" Thanksgiving diners, the occupiers placed his son's head on display in Plymouth for 24 years.

Patriotism and Racism — The Purpose of Rulers' Lies

Ruling-class U.S. historians developed the modern Thanksgiving myth in the 1890s to help unify workers around a common, patriotic history. However, U.S. rulers continued the policy of exterminating native peoples for their land after the War of Independence against England. George Washington suggested only one day should be set aside for Thanksgiving instead of rejoicing after each massacre. Later, during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving Day a national holiday on the same day that he ordered union troops to march against the starving Sioux tribe in Minnesota.



Massacre of Pequot Native Americans

Teaching lies about "generous" Puritans of the past supports modern U.S. rulers' racist, patriotic lies about democracy. They want us to believe in the good intentions of the government at the same time bosses are using state power to strip away workers' few gains. But none of the few benefits that U.S. workers gained were graciously handed down to us from the successors of the Puritans. They were all fought for with militant strikes, demonstrations and occasionally guns.

Also, much like the Native Americans cut down by early capitalists, more than one million workers have been killed in Iraq. In Afghanistan uncounted thousands have been killed. Then and now the capitalists' motive is competition for profit. It is the capitalists — with their genocidal wars — that are the savages, not workers.

As workers in the U.S. try to enjoy the holidays, Progressive Labor Party gives thanks to all those around the world committed to smashing the bosses' racist, sexist and genocidal capitalist system. We invite all workers to join PLP and fight for communism so that one day future generations can feast on food and drink, free from the capitalists' exploitation and lies. ✪

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Reservations: U.S. Concentration Camps

U.S. Native Americans that survived the bosses' wars and diseases were forced into concentration camps — also know as reservations — with the worst, least irrigable land. Today, racism against Native Americans remains extreme. Median incomes for the latter and for Alaska Natives are 27% less than the overall U.S. median. According to the Census 2000 Special Report, of those living below the official poverty level in 1999, there were two Native Americans and Alaska Natives to every one person in the general population.

The racist oppression of Native Americans is also evident in health demographics. While the death rate for the total U.S. population has decreased by 17% between 1991 and 2006, the death rate has surged by upwards of 20% for Native American women and has remained flat for Native American men. Almost 12% of the deaths among Native Americans and Alaska Natives are alcohol-related — more than three times the percentage in the general population (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report 08/08).

A worker on an Arizona reservation reported to CHALLENGE that Homeland Security harasses and attacks workers on reservations, much like police brutalize black and Latino workers in the ghettos. It was only in 2004 that Boston, Massachusetts overturned a law banning Native Americans in the city. The law had been on the books since 1675, the year war was raging between colonists and the Wampanoag.